

A COPY of the Report of the Committee of Common Council, appointed to Consider of the Abuses committed by the Farmers of the City Markets, &c.

London, May 29. 1696.

A Complaint being made to the Common Council, of several Enormities committed by the Farmers of the City Markets, the said Court did then appoint a Committee of Four Aldermen and Eight Commoners, or any One of the said Aldermen and Two of the said Commoners, to be a Committee to consider of the Abuses complained of, and of Methods to Redress the same, and to Report the same to the said Court; which said Committee did often meet, and made strict Enquiry into the Abuses committed by the said Farmers, and did on the 29th of July following, make a Report to the Common Council, which followeth in these Words, viz.

To the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Commons in Common Council Assembled.

IN Obedience to an Order of this Honourable Court, bearing Date the 29th of May last, We whose Names are hereunto Subscribed, being of the Committee appointed to Consider of the several Abuses committed by the Farmers of the Markets, and of the Methods for the Redress thereof, have several Times met and consider'd of the same; and have Examined the present Rates received by the Farmers of the several Markets, (viz.) *Newgate, Honey-Lane, Stocks and Leaden-Hall Markets*; and do find, as they stand now Lett by the said Farmers, to amount to 6379 l. 19 s. 10 d. and for Provisions, Fruits, and other Wares brought to and sold in the said Markets, and in the Streets 4516 l. 10 s. in all 10896 l. 9 s. 10 d. which said Sum of 10896 l. 9 s. 10 d. we are of Opinion, they do Yearly receive: Besides which, we also find, that the said Farmers have received of the present Tenants 2194 l. 01 s. 6 d. by way of Fines for Admittances.

We have also Considered and Examined the Lease Granted to the Farmers, and likewise the Act of Common Council made in the Mayoralty of Sir William Hooker, and do find, that they have exacted greater Rents than in the said Act is mentioned.

We have also several Times heard the Complaints of the Market People, Inhabitants and others, and do find, That the said Farmers have taken from them greater Rates than they ought to have done, Extorting the same by all the ill Usages imaginable, as by putting them to vexatious Suits, Arresting, Imprisoning, and Ruining many of them, and thereby have forced them from the said Markets, which have very much Inhanced the Rates of Provisions, and made them the more scarce.

And also find, That the said Farmers have turned, and allowed others to turn, the Market-Houses, and a great number of Stalls and Standings into inclosed Shops, many of which are Lett to several Traders, to the great Prejudice of the House-Keepers and Freemen of this City, which might be much better Employed in the Sale of Provisions; others of the said Shops are Lett to Butchers and Hucksters, which very much encourage Regrating and Forestalling of Provisions, and the Advancement of the Prices thereof.

We humbly conceive, That great Sums are Exactd by way of Rents and Fines, and are yet undiscovered, through the Dread many of the Market People were under, of being farther Oppressed by the Farmers, in Case the City did not give them Relief.

Upon the whole Matter, We are of Opinion, That the present Farmers have Forfeited their Lease by Non-Payment of their Rent, and by Converting the Markets to other Uses than ought to be by the Covenants contained therein; and that, according to a Proviso in the said Lease, Five Shillings may be tender'd to avoid the same accordingly, and that the said Markets may be managed by a Committee, according to the aforementioned Act, which We humbly conceive will tend much to the Advantage of the City, and the Ease of the People concerned: All which we humbly submit to the Wisdom of this Honourable Court.

*Wm Gore,
Robert Rowland,*

*Samuel Westfall,
Peter Parker,*

*Daniel Dorvill,
Roger Thompson,*

*John Sherbooke,
Thomas Aunger.*

The said Committee did the 5th of August following order the Publishing a Printed Table of Rates. (for the Information of the Market People) as settled in an Act of Common Council, made the 17th of September, 1674.

And likewise, That the Farmers of the said Markets have Covenanted in their Lease, That in case they or any of them shall at any time (during the Term thereby demised) Exact or Take any greater Rates or Duties than are limited and appointed by the aforesaid Act of Common-Council, they or some of them shall pay to the City, for every time they shall so Exact or Take, the Penalty of Ten Pounds.

And that if the said Farmers, or their Assigns, shall Require and Receive more than according to the aforesaid Rates, or Disturb the Market-People, who have paid or tender'd the said Legal Rates, in the quiet Selling or Exposing to Sale, according to Law, their Commodities; It is Recommended to the Parties grieved, to apply themselves to the Lord Mayor, or some other Justice of Peace of this City, for Redress; And to give Notice thereof to this Committee, that they may be proceeded against according to Law, and the Covenants and Conditions of their Lease.

Note, That the said Committee being determined, and no Regard had to the Prosecuting of their begun Reformation of the Abuses then complained of, the greatest part of them are still continued, to the very great Oppression of the Poor Market-People, and Inhancing of the Prices of Victuals Sold in the said Markets.

Now that all Persons aggrieved may be inform'd what provision the Law hath made in this Case; The Statute made the 3d. Year of Edw. 1. cap. 31. against excessive Toll, follows in these Words:

Touching them that take outrageous Toll, contrary to the Common Custom of the Realm in Market Towns. It is provided, That if any do so in the King's Town, which is Lett in Fee Farm, the King shall seize into his own hand the Franchise of the Market. And if it be anothers Town, and the same be done by the Lord of the Town, the King shall do in like manner. And if it be done by a Bailiff or any mean Officer, without the commandment of his Lord, he shall restore to the Plaintiff as much more for the outrageous taking, as he had of him if he had carried away his Toll, and shall have forty days Imprisonment.

*A Copy of the Report of the
Committee of Common Coun-
cil, appointed to Consider of
the Abuses committed by the
Farmers of the City Markets.*

Made July 29. 1696.

For Mr Smith in
Doane Street near
Chicago side

